

Secrets, Scouts and Supposedly(s)

by littleraichu

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Summary: Delia and Patsy are supposed to be having dinner with Mrs

Busby. Trixie and Barbara are supposed to be going to the cinema.

They are NOT supposed to be at the same place at the same time. Work in progress.

1. Chapter 1

"Are you sure you two won't join us?" asked Trixie.

Delia looked to Patsy who shook her head with a smirk; "can't I'm afraid, we promised Delia's mother we would meet her for dinner."

Delia stifled a snigger, "yes, I'm afraid a night with Gregory Peck is no match for a roast dinner with a side of discomfort."

Barbara placed a hand on Delia's arm sympathetically, "is your mother still having a hard time with you working in London?"

Delia sighed, "why would I want the smog of London when I could have the green hills of home?"

Trixie gazed at her friends through the mirror, then applied lipstick and kissed her reflection. "I for one am thankful to be in this vibrant city; the dancing, the men, the..." Trixie frowned, "well at least I would be if any of my friends would join me!"

Trixie pointedly stared at Delia and Barbara, pausing in turn. Finally her gaze rested on Patsy, the red-head laughed and exclaimed "Honestly Trix, it's like living in a nunnery!"

Delia and Barbara were highly amused. Trixie narrowed her eyes like a gunman in a shoot-out.

Barbara, realising that Trixie did not quite see the humour, shifted

nervously. "Sorry Trixie, it's just not really my thing."

Trixie laughed, a little too late, thought Barbara.

"Really?" asked Trixie, "does Tom know?" She roared joyously, joined Barbara's arm with hers and sauntered out of the room, oblivious to the blushing faces of Patsy and Delia.

"Have fun girls!" Trixie called from the stairs.

Delia and Patsy stared at each other, suppressing a laugh. Then, from the bottom of the stairs an inquisitive Barbara asked "does Tom know _what_?"

Delia and Barbara fell into each other's arms, laughing like children. "Oh poor Barbara, so innocent" remarked Patsy.

"Or incredibly intelligent?" asked Delia, "resisting the temptation of dancing and men and dancing _with_ men on the grounds of naivety and religion?"

Patsy raised an eyebrow, "it's a nun's life for us then Deils." Delia placed her arm around the taller woman and nuzzled into her chest.

"Oh please Patience Mount, the only habit you have is one for cute Welsh girls."

Patsy kissed the top of Delia's head, "a filthy habit but one I'm resigned to."

Delia tried to suppress a laugh, "cheeky" she said, and met Patsy's lips with her own.

2. Chapter 2

Barbara and Trixie sat on a bus en route to the picture theatre. Barbara adored the cinema, the pure spectacle of it. Cinema-going in her younger years had been to films with religious undertones and although To Kill a Mockingbird was not religious per se, she still appreciated the morality and tolerance in it's message.

"Have you read the book, Trixie?" asked Barbara.

"Oh no, sweetie, it's too heavy for me. I like a good romance. I swear whenever Rock Hudson looks at Doris Day he's really looking at me."

Barbara smiled then realised her manners. "If you like, we can see another film, a romance or musical perhaps?"

Trixie placed both hands on Barbara's shoulders, "there you go again, trying too hard to please others. No, Gregory Peck will please me just fine, thank you very much."

"Are you sure?" asked Barbara.

"I'm sure," said Trixie, "besides you've been talking about that blasted book for months. Perhaps on our next outing we can do

something more _my thing_, as you put it."

Barbara blushed, she knew she was quite enthusiastic about the book but was mortified that she may have lingered on the verge of annoyance. "I promise to go out dancing with you to make up for it," she said, hoping to atone.

Trixie clapped her hands excitedly, "I'll hold you to that Nurse Gilbert. And remember it's a sin to swear falsehoods."

Barbara sighed, "yes, quite."

Barbara stared out the window, wondering what mess she would soon be in. She hated dances and bars, she didn't see the point in socialising when the atmosphere was too loud and chaotic to socialise in.

"Now," said Trixie, breaking Barbara's thoughts, "this movie, it's about Scouts, isn't it?"

It was only then that Barbara realised that despite her apparent non-stop talking about the novel, Trixie was never really listening. Barbara smirked and wondered whether failing to listen was worse a sin than failing to fulfil a promise.

3. Chapter 3

Delia and Patsy had changed from their earlier conservative outfits. It had been Patsy's idea to dress down for their lie. It was a very rare occurrence that all four nurses had shared a night off. Patsy was sure that if Trixie knew that she and Delia would be out dancing, she would insist on tagging along and dragging poor Barbara with her. Their night of normalcy and slow dancing to a world without judgement would be ruined. Instead she would be sitting across from Delia at a crowded table in some god forsaken bar, mentally accosting any man who so much as looked in Delia's direction. Plus Patsy knew that Delia would be devastated. Delia had been looking forward to this night for weeks, she had even planned her outfit of a spotty white dress and electric blue cardigan a fortnight in advance. She looked splendid in it too, thought Patsy. Splendid and mine. Still she thought, perhaps using Delia's mother as a diversion was going too far.

"I should have thought of a different lie," said Patsy as she and Delia walked the cobblestoned street. "Could you imagine what your mother would say if she found out? Instead of having a roast dinner..."

"You're having her daughter?" interrupted Delia.

Patsy stopped in her tracks, aghast at the words that came from the small Welsh woman. "Delia Busby!" she exclaimed, "I can't believe you kiss me with that mouth!"

Delia turned and faced her girlfriend, "amongst other things," she laughed and ran ahead.

"I most certainly do not want to know what your mother have to say about _that_!" Patsy yelled as she caught up to Delia.

4. Chapter 4

Barbara and Trixie stepped off the bus and into view of cinema lights. Trixie looked to Barbara, noticing her hesitance. "Well," she said, taking Barbara's arm in hers, "shall we?"

Barbara looked crestfallen and didn't move.

"Sweetie, what on earth is wrong? Asked Trixie. "You have that same look on your face when you realise Sister Monica Joan has consumed all the cake."

Barbara pointed to the cinema, "look." Trixie followed Barbara's direction. "Oh", she said, trying to suppress her relief. The cinema sign read 'To Kill a Mockingbird' "Sold out.'

Barbara slumped forward, shuffled to a nearby bench and sat. Trixie joined her. "I guess I didn't anticipate it's popularity" she said, at last. Trixie tapped her on the knee. "You wait here. If I can't get you Gregory Peck, I'll at least get you some sweets." Trixie entered the cinema, making way to the confectionery stand.

Barbara looked to the people lined up, ticket in hand. It was not like Barbara to get jealous, particularly over something so trivial. Usually she had the decorum of a saint, wanting for nothing and giving all she could afford. But she had so looked forward to the film, never had a book captivated her so much. She could relate to Scout's youthful enthusiasm, seeing nothing but the good in others. She respected Atticus' values; he very much reminded her of her own father. A man of conviction and principles. And truth be told, she could even relate to Boo Radley. She too had felt misunderstood. A woman her age should enjoy dancing, socialising and courting. Other women had made her feel ashamed for not being so confident in affairs of the heart. Though she had enjoyed courting Tom; it was new and thrilling, much of the expectations placed upon her was terrifying. She was glad she had Trixie and the other nurses at Nonnatus House. Although she was sure they had at one point thought her immature and naive; it was through their support and friendship that she had flourished. Barbara made up her mind to simply enjoy the night with Trixie. She could see the film another night. Besides, Trixie wasn't upset with her about dating Tom, Barbara had no right to feel upset about missing a silly film.

Trixie returned, beaming at Barbara, her hands behind her back. "So I have some marvellous news, and news a little more unsavoury. Which shall you like to hear first?"

Barbara looked to Trixie curiously. "I think I shall like to hear the good news first."

"The good news is, I got us tickets to a showing in two hours."

Barbara's eyes widened in delight. "Oh Trixie, that really is marvellous, I was afraid I had rather missed out."

"The bad news is," Trixie continued, "they only had vanilla flavoured ice cream." From behind her, Trixie revealed two ice cream cones and

handed one to Barbara.

"Oh, I don't mind at all, vanilla is my favourite," said Barbara, eyeing her ice cream..

"Why doesn't that surprise me?" stated Trixie, taking a bite. "Oh and also, we will be passing the time by having a quick dance. I know a spot not far from here."

Barbara ceased enjoying the ice cream. "Right. I didn't expect to have to fulfil the promise so soon."

"Well I told you I had bad news," laughed Trixie. "Now come on, it's a short walk from here; fabulous music and dishing men!"

xxx

Patsy was considering taking off her heels; she wasn't sure whether she could make the rest of the journey to Gateways without wincing in pain. She looked to Delia, storming ahead, eager to enter a world of her own.

"Deils, slow down a little." Delia turned to a struggling Patsy and smiled.

"Oh poor Pats," said Delia, walking to her. "There's no shame in wearing sensible shoes, I hear they're all the rage at Gateways."

"That's quite enough, thank you", said Patsy, kneeling to remove her heels and rub her feet.

"No one will suspect you on the basis of comfortable shoes, Pats. You are a nurse after all."

Delia paused, noticing the sadness in Patsy's eyes as she looked up at her.

"It's your fondness for check shirts that give you away," said Delia, trying to make Patsy laugh.

Patsy stood, heels in hand.

"And lack of humour," Delia continued.

Patsy frowned. "Oh I'm joking love. Show me your beautiful smile" asked Delia, reaching to grab Patsy's hand in reassurance.

"Do you really think I'm ashamed?" Patsy asked, pressing Delia's hand with her own.

Delia furrowed her brow, "no love, not of us."

"But of what we are?" asked Patsy, solemnly.

Delia smiled briefly and placed her spare hand over Patsy's.

"It's hard not to believe what society asks us to" said Delia.

"And do you? Do you really believe we're bad people?"

Delia shook her head. "No. Someone as brave and kind and strong and loving as you could never be bad. The world will see that one day."

Patsy kissed Delia then traced the outline of her mouth with her fingers. "I only wish the world could see what I'm seeing now. They'd know resistance is futile in the face of someone you can't help but love."

Delia smiled. "Now come on Pat, you owe me a dance."

Delia and Patsy walked ahead, Patsy had decided to walk without heels after all.

Delia put her arm around Patsy. "You don't mind if I call you Pat, Pat? It just seems fitting, seeing as women's shoes are clearly not your thing."

Patsy pushed her away playfully then leant down to put her heels back on. "You'll pay for that when I trod on your toes."

xxx

"Is it much further?" asked Barbara, "at this rate we won't be back in time for the film."

"Nonsense" said Trixie, hurrying Barbara along, "it's not far from here. Stop trying to get out of your promise. I know your game Miss Gilbert!"

"Very well," muffled Barbara.

Barbara looked to the distance, hoping to sight the 'fabulous little bar' Trixie had sought. She stopped abruptly, causing Trixie to stumble.

"You are in such a state tonight Barbara, we won't miss the film, I assure you."

Barbara ignored her, focused on a couple in the distance.

"Is that Patsy and Delia ahead?" she asked.

Trixie looked at Barbara as if the woman had finally gone mad. Then she looked to the distance, squinting her eyes.

She spotted a tall red-headed woman, kneeling down with a short brunette beside her. Though they were some distance ahead, she could see that both were dressed to impress.

"It couldn't possibly be, they're at dinner with Mrs Busby. Looking not so fabulous I might add."

Barbara and Trixie walked closer.

"It is them", whispered Barbara, "I recognise Patsy's green coat."

"I'm sure it's just another tall red-head with a green coat," said Trixie, reassuring herself.

"Accompanied by a small brunette woman wearing Delia's favourite blue cardigan" added Barbara.

Trixie stopped and watched as Delia and Patsy walked further away; Delia walking briskly and Patsy struggling to keep up.

"But why would they say they're having dinner with Mrs Busby when they clearly aren't?" asked Trixie, upset.

Barbara placed her hand on Trixie's shoulder.

"I wouldn't read too much into it, Trix. Mrs Busby probably cancelled and so they decided to make a night of it."

Trixie crossed her arms.

"No that's not it."

Trixie paused.

"Trix, I'm sure whatever you're thinking, it's wrong. Remember when you accused Patsy of trying to steal Tom? It turned out she was teaching him to dance " so he could impress _you_."

Trixie turned to Barbara."If I recall, I also accused you and look how that turned out."

Barbara looked down, embarrassed and upset.

"I'm sorry Barbara, I didn't mean that. I'm just hurt that they so obviously wish to exclude me from their fun."

Trixie stared ahead, lost in thought. She opened her mouth to say something but thought better of it. Trixie looked to Barbara, quizzically.

"Unless..." Trixie trailed off, thinking.

"Unless what?" asked Barbara.

Trixie grabbed Barbara's arm and motioned the brunette forward.

"Come on, let's follow."

5. Chapter 5

Delia could see The Gateways Club ahead, she increased her pace in excitement. It was an inconspicuous building, rather residential looking, with no hint of the frivolity inside. The only sign that the building enjoyed frequent company were the figures lingering outside, waiting for friends, enjoying a cigarette, or huddling in the cold.

"Hurry up Pats!" called Delia.

"I couldn't possibly be any faster Deils!" yelled Patsy.

Waiting for Patsy had caused Delia to once again recognise the brutality of the brisk London air. She cupped her hands together and breathed into them. It was unfortunate that mittens did not coordinate with her outfit, she thought.

Patsy, at last, caught up to her.

"Why in such a hurry? The club isn't going anywhere" said Patsy, smiling.

Delia held Patsy's hand and motioned her forward. "I know", she said, "but if getting there one minute sooner means one more minute dancing with you, I'll take it."

Patsy squeezed Delia's hand before spotting two women smoking outside the club. She scrunched her face, looking to Delia in hope.

"Just one cigarette?" Patsy asked, "I'll be quick. _And_ you owe me for your constant teasing earlier."

Delia groaned, "I tell you what. If this is your last, I will condone it."

"Last?" Patsy paused. "Ever?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Delia, pressing a finger into Patsy's side. "You promised me you'd give it up. It's very unbecoming."

"I'll consider it."

Delia glared at her and crossed her arms.

"_Annnd_ consider it done" said Patsy, groaning. "Now what was that other nasty habit I needed to forgo?"

She looked to Delia, "something about cute Welsh girls?"

Delia pushed Patsy's side playfully, "you wouldn't dare!"

Patsy took hold of Delia from behind and wrapped her arms around Delia's hips, sure she was amongst like minded company. "You're my only vice and one I intend to keep" she whispered into Delia's ear.

"And I intend to _keep_ you. As long as I can._ So after this, no more cigarettes. Promise?" asked Delia, snuggled in the arms of the taller woman. "Promise" said Patsy, releasing her girlfriend.

Patsy rummaged through her handbag, took out a packet of cigarettes and placed one into her mouth. She looked to Delia, noting there were still several cigarettes left. "Surely, though, you mean last packet?" she said, cigarette dangling.

Delia looked away, in feigned annoyance.

"Come on" said Patsy, taking the cigarette out of her mouth, "show me that beautiful smile."

Delia turned her back, clearly suppressing a smile. Patsy rummaged further through her bag. "Blast", she said, "I'm positive I put some matches in here."

Delia giggled and turned to Patsy, sheepishly. "You're an absolute devil!" said Patsy.

"But one you intend to keep."

Patsy looked to the two women smoking, hesitant to ask for a light. Both were the older masculine type. Patsy had seen their likes in Gateways before. Wearing dapper suits, tailored to their lanky bodies, hair slicked back in the style worn by men in the 1920s. Although Patsy was not attracted to their 'type', she had admired their boldness, their unwillingness to be anyone but themselves.

Patsy smiled as they noted her. Delia noted their comfortable shoes.

Patsy took initiative and walked toward them, Delia followed behind.

Xxx

Trixie and Barbara were in detective mode. Their coat collars stood stiffly in a lame attempt at concealing their faces. They approached the corner of the street with trepidation. Trixie peered around the corner, then turned to Barbara.

"I can see them," she said, "they've stopped in front of some building."

"Trixie, I don't feel right about this" complained Barbara.

"We are not doing anything wrong" explained Trixie.

"Spying on your friends? There's a distinct possibility that's frowned upon" said Barbara.

"We are not spying," said Trixie, harshly. "Those two are clearly hiding something. Perhaps something dangerous. I'm concerned for them, that's all."

Barbara crossed her arms.

"Trixie Franklin, it is one thing to spy on your friends, but a completely different matter to insinuate heroism on your part. This is nothing but snooping into matters that are none of our business. Just leave them be."

Trixie looked to Barbara in shock, she had never heard such a stern tone from her timid friend. She took a moment to reflect. Perhaps it was none of her business, but why the secrets?

Trixie had been a good friend to Patsy; she had even confessed to her an alcohol addiction. If Patsy was hiding something, surely she could trust her? Still, she thought, perhaps she had confided in Delia instead and that's why their bond was so close. Trixie felt a sudden pain of jealousy. Then, she thought, if Patsy had told Delia, who

else has she told? Trixie contemplated, then gasped.

"You know something!" exclaimed Trixie, "tell me everything!"

Barbara put her hands up in defence.

"I know nothing, I assure you."

At any other time, on any other day, Trixie would have laughed and said 'yes, we are all aware of that, thankyou Barbara' but she was not in the mood for foolery. Instead she sighed and peered around the corner once more. Suddenly, her hand reached back, clasping Barbara's arm.

"I knew it!" she exclaimed loudly, before covering her mouth and retreating.

Barbara looked at Trixie, concerned, then gingerly peeped toward the edge of the building. Trixie peered over her shoulder. Together they saw Patsy and Delia talking in the intimate surrounds of two dapper figures. Patsy placed her hand on the taller one, laughing as she blew cigarette smoke in the air. Delia looked on, her smile was so wide Trixie was sure she had never seen her so happy.

Barbara and Trixie turned away and braced themselves against the cloak of the building.

"I'm sure it's nothing" said Barbara.

"Oh please. They're canoodling with gentlemen! Upper class gentlemen at that." Trixie paused, seething. "Dinner with Mrs Busby, what rot! Sophisticated Patsy is clearly ashamed of us. Of me!"

Trixie paused, solemnly. "I'm sophisticated," she protested, trying to reassure herself. "I dial the phone with a pencil!"

Barbara placed her hands on Trixie's shoulders. "They could be friends," she said slowly.

"Well," said Trixie, stepping back, "remind me to dress like that", she pointed in the direction of the giddy lovers, "the next time I greet Fred in the garden with a cup of tea!"

Trixie watched Delia, Patsy and their dapper companions enter the non-descript building. She followed in their direction.

"Come on," she growled, "we're going in."

6. Chapter 6

Patsy thanked the handsome woman as she opened the door to let the couple through.

The room was alive with music, laughter, dancing, flirting. Patsy held Delia's hand behind her as she walked the length of the room.

They walked by admiring suitors and flirting couples of all kinds.

Gateways, it seems, was as diverse in clientele as any other club. There were women who adopted the same tailored suiting as their new friends. Young women, not unlike Barbara or Trixie, who blushed as their eyes met across the bar. There were older couples, clearly still in love, comfortable in their silences.

Patsy smiled nostalgically, admiring one such couple as they sat drinking their cocktail and beer. Their hands held above the table. One of the women, with short cropped silver hair, smiled back at Patsy. Patsy watched as the woman's eyes moved along the length of Patsy's hand; she was still holding Delia close. Delia was oblivious, too consumed in her surrounds. The woman looked back to Patsy and nodded, as if to say _'we're both incredibly lucky. Aren't we?_'_ Patsy nodded back in silent agreement.

Patsy searched the room and spotted a vacant booth. She led Delia in it's direction. Glancing around as Patsy pulled her along, Delia noticed a young girl in a crisp white shirt, denim jeans and leather jacket. The young girl leaned into a blushing lady in floral and whispered in her ear. Delia looked her up and down, a little too long, thought Patsy as she caught her staring.

They sat at the booth. Delia continued to gaze over the room. She had been to Gateways on several occasions, yet she was still astounded at the open affection displayed.

Patsy sat back and watched Delia as her eyes drifted back to the leather clad woman. She was not butch, yet certainly not feminine, a tom-boy but with a bravado and confidence that Delia couldn't even comprehend. It was certainly working on the blushing lady, thought Delia.

Delia looked to Patsy; disapproval cemented on her girlfriend's face. "_What?_" she asked.

"You know _what_. You're here with _me_, remember?" stated Patsy, feigning jealousy.

Delia laughed. "Naww, Pats. I was admiring her outfit, honest."

Patsy scoffed, "as long as you don't admire her out of it."

Patsy looked the girl up and down. "Is she really your type?" she asked, a hint of fear in her voice.

Delia snuggled closer to her girlfriend. "You know my type. Tall red-heads with enormous blue eyes." Patsy smiled at her. "Although," Delia continued, "I wouldn't mind seeing you in that jacket."

Patsy took a moment to appreciate the attire. She glanced back at Delia.

Delia bit her bottom lip. "Just the jacket", she whispered, her voice husky.

Patsy's eyes widened. She kissed Delia briefly to distract from the red rising in her cheeks.

"What has come over you tonight Delia?" asked Patsy, pulling away,

still in disbelief.

"Sorry, Pats", Delia's face matched the red of her girlfriends. "I'm making up for all the times I've had to bite my tongue."

They stared at each other in recognition of all their sacrifices.

"And I'm not going to make any remarks about tongues" said Delia, breaking the tension.

Patsy laughed. "Well", she said, ignoring the innuendo, "I do believe we came here to dance."

Patsy stood, held out her hand and led Delia to the dance floor. They held each other closely, their eyes lost in each other. _'I can't stop loving you'_ filled the room.

It was true, thought Patsy, as she mouthed the lyrics to her lover: _'I can't stop loving you, I've made up my mind...'_ _

Delia's eyes welled, she leaned into Patsy and rested her head on the taller woman's chest. They moved slowly to the music; eyes closed, mouths smiling.

7. Chapter 7

Trixie marched to the front door of _The Gateways Club,_ ready to burst through. She felt a hard tug at her shoulder as Barbara held her back.

"Trixie," warned Barbara, hand still on shoulder, "it's not too late. You don't have to do this!"

Barbara noticed two women, each with cigarette in hand, leaning against the side of the building. Both wore their hair down, adorned in winter coats, their pretty dresses peaking through the opening. It looked as though they had coordinated their outfits. The only distinction between them was their hair; one a brunette, one platinum blonde.

The women stopped their friendly conversation and watched the drama unfolding before them. Barbara moved from the door, cowering to the side.

"We could just go to the movie," she said, her voice quieter. "It will give you time to calm yourself. And, if you like, you can raise the issue with Patsy when she comes home."

Barbara waited for a response. Trixie's steely stare lasered through her.

"Doesn't that sound like a more sensible idea?" Barbara asked, hopeful.

Barbara looked to the two women, still watching. She smiled apologetically. She didn't know why, she had nothing to apologize for.

Trixie did not share the same need to be quiet. She was so angry she did not care if the two women or anyone else knew of it. "_A sensible idea!?" she yelled. It was louder than she intended but she could not contain herself.

Barbara lowered her head, aware of the eyes upon her.

"A sensible idea," Trixie continued, harsh but slowly, "is when someone you care about dearly, someone you _love_, tells you you she's _seeing someone!_"

"I'm gonna need another cigarette" said the brunette, watching, bracing the wall.

Trixie ignored the audience. "For months now Barbara, I've pretended to be asleep every time she crept in late. Dishevelled. Clothes askew. I figured she had simply worked late, had a hard shift."

Trixie paused .

"But now I _know_," Trixie breathed, almost crying. Barbara stepped closer in an attempt to comfort her but stopped as Trixie put her hands up and stepped away.

"Oh poor dear," said the blonde. The brunette nodded in agreement, "we've all been there."

Trixie turned and walked toward the door. The blonde woman stood straight and steadied herself as Trixie walked toward her.

Trixie placed her hand against the door, but stopped when the blonde called to her.

"You tell her exactly how you feel, love" she said, eyes sympathetic. "Yeah," said the brunette, "you deserve better."

I do deserve better, thought Trixie. After all she confided, after all she had helped Patsy through and yet she still couldn't reveal that she had a gentleman friend. Trixie had thought them best friends, but perhaps they were merely two people who shared a room. She suddenly blushed, embarrassed at her misunderstanding.

"Go on then" encouraged the brunette.

Trixie neither nodded in solidarity, nor told them to mind her own business. The latter, a good suggestion, thought Barbara. Trixie simply swished dramatically and stepped inside.

Barbara stared at the door, conflicted.

The two women dropped their cigarettes to the ground, twisted the flame against the heel of their shoes and opened the door. "Coming in?" asked the blonde, holding the door as Barbara braced herself and stepped inside.

Xxx

Trixie first noted how crowded the club was. She feared it would be impossible to confront her two former friends. They were very likely

huddled in the corner, hands all over their 'gentlemen.' Trixie scoffed at the word.

Trixie walked a few steps, scanning the room for a tall red-head, paying close attention to darkened corners. It must be ladies night, she thought, noticing a number of women, sitting at tables, talking to each other.

Then, in the distance, Trixie spotted the two tall figures in tailored suits, hair slicked back. Her eyes shifted. But no sign of Patsy and Delia. Still, she thought, at least if she approached the men, the two scoundrels wouldn't be far away. _Oh the look on their smug faces_, thought Trixie gleefully, as she made a beeline to the men.

Xxx

Barbara could not see Trixie anywhere and that worried her. She was alone, in a bar and soon there would be a scene. Trixie was very good at making a scene, remembered Barbara. She thought back to Trixie's passive aggressive, and then, just downright aggressive treatment of her when Trixie had thought, rightly, that she and Tom were interested in each other.

"Oh boy", she sighed.

"You lost your friend?" she heard a voice say. Barbara turned to her side, and there at the bar, sat the blonde woman from outside. "Yes," she acknowledged, "I'm afraid I'm the least of her concerns."

The blonde patted the seat next to her and motioned Barbara to join.

"She did seem to be a woman on a mission", said the woman as Barbara shifted herself on the seat. Barbara looked at her closely, she was very pretty, with just the right amount of make-up. She had kind eyes too thought Barbara, suddenly ashamed of her negative thoughts earlier.

"Yes," said Barbara, at last, "I really should go and find her before..." Barbara trailed, she was really unsure of what would happen, truth be told.

"Fiery one is she?" laughed the blonde. Barbara didn't answer. Nervous now, she felt obliged to stay and make polite conversation.

"I'm Lara by the way" said the blonde, holding out her hand. "I'm Barbara", she smiled and shook the blonde's hand.

Xxx

Trixie approached the men with a steely resolve; she would be bolder and tougher than they would ever be.

She noticed, however, as she stood inches from them, that they were much more slight than she expected. Muscle men were clearly not Patsy and Delia's type, she thought.

It was only once she made eye contact that Trixie realised that she

didn't quite know what to say. She knew what she would say, _well yell_, to Patsy sure, but these men she had no words for.

"You alright, love?" said the shorter of the two, looking at Trixie concerned. His voice broke Trixie's thoughts, it was much... _lighter_ than she expected. Still, she thought, _modern times_. Just as there were women of all shapes and sizes, there too were men of odd shapes and odd... voices. She looked to the other man, his brow tense in confusion, his cheek bones high and delicate.

"Ah, yes" Trixie stumbled, "I believe you are _acquainted_ with two friends of mine." She had meant to be firm, but she suddenly felt uneasy. She searched their faces, unsure of why she found them so intriguing, so different.

Xxx

"So I take it you've lost your friend too?" asked Barbara.

"My friend?" asked Lara.

"The brunette... from outside" Barbara reminded her.

"Oh yes, we barely know each other to be honest. Just a friend of mine thought we'd get along. I can see why, we both have similar taste in clothing. Obviously."

Barbara laughed.

"And movies", Lara continued, "but we're also so different, you know?"

Barbara nodded. "Yes. Still, having similar interests is an important start. Actually Trixie and I, Trixie's my friend from earlier, we were supposed to see a film tonight, but it sold out. And then, well..."

"And then a whole other drama unfolded before your eyes."

Barbara laughed, so far the whole bar experience hadn't been so horrible, she surmised.

"What was the film you were going to see?" asked Lara.

"To Kill a Mockingbird."

Lara braced her chest in excitement, "oh I just adored the book!" she squealed.

Barbara squealed too, then she quickly covered her mouth, shocked that such a sound could come from her tiny frame.

Xxx

Trixie patiently described Patsy and Delia to the two gentleman. She could not fathom why boyfriends would require a detailed portrait of their girlfriends to jog their memory. She narrowed her eyes at them, surmising that they had too many girlfriends to keep track of. She knew their type, suave and sleazy, making up for what they lacked in masculinity by being complete and utter hounds. Trixie failed to see

what such beautiful and sensible girls like Patsy and Delia could see in these boys. She made a mental note to tell them that too, whilst she berated them for lack of loyalty.

"Well come on," Trixie said, impatient, "you must know them. I saw you _flirting_ outside."

The taller man laughed knowingly. He turned to his shorter companion, "she means the cute girls who asked for a match, love." Trixie detested his use of 'cute girls.' She was sure that's how he referred to all women, as simply nice things to look at.

Trixie paused and contemplated his other phrasing. 'Love?' she thought. But before she could make sense of it, the shorter man pointed to the dance floor. "They're over there", he said, "_flirting_."

Trixie turned to the back of the room. It swelled with dancing couples. Some women embraced similarly dapper but svelte looking gentleman. Their embrace was entirely inappropriate for a Rock 'N' Roll song, she thought.

Trixie then noticed that some women were dancing with _each other_. That's fine, thought Trixie, she and Patsy had also danced together once. Albeit not so comfortably. And those women certainly did seem very... _comfortable_.

Trixie averted her gaze, not wanting to stare. She walked onto the dance floor, her head spinning. She had only looked around for a second when she saw them.

"Patsy and Delia" she mouthed to herself, taking another step toward them.

They were dancing, just as she had done with Patsy, at a respectable distance, laughing and moving in time to the upbeat song. It looked purely innocent, like two friends enjoying a night of freedom.

The song ended. Laughter and conversation filled the room. Trixie was about to call out to them, but stopped when she noticed Delia step an inch closer to Patsy. Patsy reached down and grazed Delia's cheek with the back of her hand, lovingly.

And then it hit her: the abundance of women, the 'men' with high cheek bones and fine features, women dancing together. This was not _ladies_ _night_... well it was ladies night but for a very specific _kind_ of lady.

Trixie glanced over the room once more. It was clear that the other women dancing together were not merely friends. There was a deep intimacy surrounding them. She scanned further. Women leaned their buxom sweethearts against walls, couples giggled over shared drinks, women held hands above tables. She had been so caught up in her own sense of injustice that she had been oblivious to her surrounds. _To the truth_. Until now.

Trixie turned back to her two friends. She stood dumb struck as Patsy shared a slow, longing kiss with Delia.

Trixie gasped, loudly.

Delia broke away, her eyes searched for the source of the sound.

Delia's gasp came equally as loud.

"What's wrong, sweetheart?" asked Patsy as she turned to see Trixie, mouth open.

Patsy, like Trixie and Delia before her, gasped. Hers perhaps the loudest of all.

All three women stood with the same expression, like plastic moving clowns at a Carnie stand.

Patsy distanced herself from Delia as delicately as she could. She stuttered, unable to get her words out. She was about to speak an actual human sentence when she saw Barbara approach.

"Oh there you all are," Barbara greeted them, excitedly. It was a fake attempt to diffuse any uncomfortable stand off she had likely entered into. Her smile, however, wavered when she saw the same look of absolute shock shared amongst her friends.

"So," Barbara continued, "We've missed the film..."

Her friends continued to stare at each other, unmoving.

Barbara shifted uncomfortably. "Knew we wouldn't make it. Should have called it _'To Kill A Moping Bird.'_"

She paused. "And by bird, I mean Trixie."

Nothing.

Barbara laughed, forced and uncomfortable. "Am I right?" she asked, with a broken voice.

****To be continued****

8. Chapter 8

Delia and Barbara sat on the bus. Quick thinking, perfect in a crisis Delia, had managed to get Barbara out the door before she realised, that she had in fact, shared a drink with a lovely lesbian in a gay bar.

"Let me take you home, Barbara" Delia had commanded, tone masking the absolute panic she felt inside. "I'm sure Patsy and Trixie would like to speak somewhere perhaps_ a little more private_." She had given Trixie a stern, knowing look and squeezed Patsy's arm as she quickly led Barbara to the exit. Patsy had been too struck by fear to protest Delia's gesture. Words and actions failed her.

Barbara, in her politeness, was sure to say goodbye to Lara. Barbara had failed to see the disappointment in the blonde's eyes as she sauntered out, arm in arm, with the cute Welsh brunette. Delia, however, had noticed. It had provided a brief moment of relief from her rising fear. If only the blonde had also heard her say 'l_et me

take you home, Barbara_, ' she thought.

But that moment had passed. Sitting next to Barbara in a near empty bus had caused Delia's anxiety to increase once more. She sighed and watched the rain soaked streets from the back of the bus. It would be at least forty minutes until they reached Nonnatus house.

Delia wondered whether she should confront Barbara and ask why the hell they had followed her. But no, she thought, that would lead to further questions she wasn't sure she could answer.

Barbara fidgeted in her seat. The warmth from Delia, as they sat next to each other, only served to remind her that she had invaded her friend's space. Figuratively and now physically. She shifted closer to the edge of the seat, feeling the harsh breeze on her legs.

Barbara and Delia looked to each other and smiled " Barbara awkwardly, Delia with a hint of emotion that Barbara couldn't quite decipher. Anger? Embarrassment?

Uncomfortable with the eye contact, both women diverted their gaze. Both searching for words but unable to find them.

Barbara sighed. She wondered whether she should confront Delia and ask why she had been keeping secrets, why she failed to trust in their friendship. She too had a gentleman friend, they could have swapped stories, ventured on double dates even. Barbara had found the concept of 'couple dating' rather exotic " unaware the term 'couple dating' had more than one meaning. But no, she thought, that would lead to further questions she wasn't sure she could answer.

Delia could see Barbara's reflection in the bus window. Between the quiet sighs and picking at her woollen stockings, Barbara made brief glances toward her, mouth opening slightly, then closing again. The poor dear desperately wanted to talk about what had transpired, thought Delia. Her stomach turned. She wasn't sure whether there would be an apology or confrontation. She was sure, however, that she wouldn't dare risk finding out.

Delia took a moment to think rationally. Though she was sure that Barbara had been unaware of her surroundings, she also sure that Barbara could sense that something was amiss. Barbara was naïve but not stupid. Surely, though, she was polite enough to avoid the goings on of the night? She was a Catholic girl after all.

Delia needed a distraction.

She was well practised at avoiding delicate conversations. She had years of practice. Christmas with the extended Busby family was a nightmare of pronouns and forced smiles as her Mam reassured relatives that Delia was a career girl, simply working too hard to settle down. If ever a conversation risked veering toward her personal life (_When will you start a family? Any nice Doctors?_) Delia would pretend to be so invested in the mundane, everyday life of others to warrant mention of herself. Nursing and London was nothing compared to small town antics. Delia was convincing too, nodding in feigned interest to talk of the latest sponge recipe or the beauty of the Welsh language. Asking all the questions any good, social, _normal_ girl would ask of good, social, normal women. _And

how exactly do you get the sponge to be so fluffy? Seen any good films lately?_

And it was with this reminiscing that Delia thought of how she could steer Barbara away from any incrimination.

She laughed. Suddenly. Convincingly. Just as she had learnt over decades of awkward Christmas dinners.

Barbara looked at her, concerned it was the kind of hysterical laughing people did when they were incredibly upset. 'The vapours' her Dad had called it.

"I'm sorry," said Delia, placing her hand on her mouth, in a mock effort to keep her giggling inside. "I just got the joke."

Barbara was intrigued, "the joke?" she asked.

"Yes," Delia laughed, "_To Kill A Moping Bird_... how long had you kept that gem squirreled away?"

Barbara joined in the laughter. "Oh gosh, I was dying to tell Trixie ever since I realised we wouldn't be seeing the film. She had just found out about you and the gentlemen. She dragged me, moping, all around Chelsea. So I thought moping, mocking..."

Barbara stopped abruptly, her eyes wide. She realised that she had just raised the elephant in the bus. She was quite pleased with this word-play also. Disappointed that now was not the time to share her semantic-based wit.

So much for the diversion, thought Delia as she turned to the window, avoiding Barbara's gaze. Quickly her panic gave way to confusion. _Gentleman?_ She thought.

Barbara shifted further toward the edge of the seat.

Xxx

Patsy and Trixie had not moved since the revelation. They were at a complete stand-off, each determined that the other would make the first move.

It was Patsy, uncomfortable at Trixie's gaze, who lost the silent battle. She couldn't stand the knowing look in Trixie's eye. One of judgement and terror. She had seen it before.

Patsy envisioned an earlier moment she had been revealed for all she was. Except, in a previous life she had been the revealer "her School chum, Cathy, the recipient. Patsy had been careful. It was only when she was sure that Cathy had not felt ill at the concept, when she was positive that Cathy, with her complete disinterest in boys and growing interest in the pretty new teacher, had felt a similar longing, that she mustered the courage to tell.

Cathy was _not_ _relieved_ to find a like-minded soul, as Patsy had hoped. Cathy was alarmed and terrified. She had screamed that Patsy was a deviant, a sinner, a criminal. Patsy could still see her eyes, eyes that told her she was a disgrace. Eyes that both feared her and _feared_ for her_. Eyes that now belonged to Trixie.

Patsy's face filled with grief. She turned and ran toward the back of the club, finding solace in the littered, beer-stenched back alley. The cold startled her. She collapsed against the wall of an adjacent building, head rested against bended knees, hyperventilating.

She did not hear the door swing open, nor footsteps walk to her side. Her senses were filled with an inability to breathe, only confounded by the desperate heartache she felt in her chest. She was positive her heart had been torn out.

A hand on her shoulder only heightened her senses. She knew it was Trixie – the realisation of her closeness engulfed her. She was trapped, like a wounded animal. Angry and afraid.

Refusing to lift her head, Patsy sobbed into her knees, simultaneously sucking in any air she could find. Patsy heaved and cried, unable to find her breath, yet refusing to lift her head to source more air.

"Patsy?" coaxed Trixie, tone of a nurse - unfriendly yet professional. "You need to look up. You need to breathe," Trixie commanded, deliberately cold and clinical.

Patsy sucked in the stifled air. "_no!_", she found the strength to cry.

Trixie knelt in front of Patsy and lifted her chin. It was more forceful than she had intended but she did not have the disposition to be delicate. Patsy's head tilted upwards, but still she refused to look at Trixie.

Trixie could see that Patsy's mascara had run, her face blotchy and red. She was the cause. She knew this. But part of her, an ugly part admittedly, had thought, hadn't Patsy bought this on herself? What Patsy _hid_, what Patsy _was_...

Trixie gulped, her thoughts interrupted as Patsy shifted her focus. No longer avoiding eye contact, Patsy stared at her pointedly, with what she could only describe as the burning, scorching heat of a thousand atomic suns.

"_Why_" Patsy sucked air in, "_are you even_", her chest heaved "_here!_" she managed to scream, her voice enveloped in a low, husky tone.

It was a question Trixie had never expected to arise. Certainly a question she had never expected to answer. Trixie had thought that _she_ would be asking the questions. S_he_ had nothing to answer for. But she had, hadn't she?

Trixie mentally repeated the question – W_hy. Are. You. Even. Here?_

She stepped back, found the wall adjacent to Patsy and slowly dragged herself down. The ground was hard and wet. It would surely leave a stain on her outfit but she was beyond caring.

Patsy and Trixie stared into the abyss of each other. At a stand-off once more.

9. Chapter 9

Delia stared at her own reflection in the bus window, street lights streamed across her face. "What are you talking about Barbara?" she asked. The words came soft and half-heartedly, unsure she wanted to know.

Barbara addressed Delia's reflection; thankful that she hadn't turned to her. "I'm awfully sorry Deils, I had tried to stop it. But you know what Trixie's like when she has a cause."

Delia turned to her.

Barbara looked to her lap, uncomfortable with Delia's searching eyes. "We saw you on the street, all dressed up. You looked lovely. Still do." Barbara picked once more at her woollen stockings. "It was clear that you weren't going to dinner with Mrs Bu... with your mum, that you were having a night out. And Trixie felt slighted I guess. So did I if I'm honest. I know that's no excuse"

"So you were _spying on us?_" asked Delia, her anger just barely controlled.

Barbara scratched at a loose thread on her thigh. "No." She looked to Delia, eyes full of guilt. "Not at first."

Delia turned rapidly to the window once more.

For how long? She thought, in realisation of the possibilities.

Was it possible that Barbara was playing her for a fool? Possible that she actually saw when Patsy had kissed her on the street? Or when Patsy had wrapped her arms around her? Possible that Barbara was simply waiting for a guilty admission? _Possible even_ that Barbara had thought it best to mark it unseen, to never be spoken of. Such was the sin of her love.

"What did you _see?_" Delia asked, solemnly.

Barbara shifted once more, but she was now too far over the edge. She stumbled from the seat but gathered herself quickly. "I'm sorry..." she said, then sat in the adjacent seat.

"Barbara?" Delia looked to her. Barbara was sorry, had moved from her. As if she was someone to be pitied. As if she were contagious. Her chest ached.

"The gentlemen" Barbara explained.

The gentlemen. Of course. She had been irrational in her panic. Barbara's excited, oblivious greeting in the club, despite the clientele, despite an interest from a pretty blonde, despite " or perhaps because of " the unconvincing 'gentlemen,' proved she didn't know a thing.

Delia breathed a sigh of relief.

"It was nothing really," reassured Barbara, mistaking Delia's long exhale as anxiety. "Just the two of you laughing with them, sharing a cigarette. You seemed close."

Delia realised now who she had meant. The handsome women from _Gateways_, who politely offered a match and traded stories of their night. They were funny, charming even. _Gentlemen_. The misconception caused Delia to smile, slightly. The women would be chuffed if they knew.

Barbara paused, her mouth curling at the edges.

"You seemed really happy Delia."

And just as quickly as it came, Delia's smile gave way to a frown. _You seemed really happy._

Barbara tried to read Delia's face. It appeared to hold conflicting emotions. Fleeting and transient.

"I _am_ happy." Delia said, at last.

"Then why do you look so sad?" asked Barbara, leaning over and placing a hand on Delia's knee.

How could she tell Barbara that she was sad for the lie she had to tell? For the magnitude the falsehood had taken?

It was no longer a simple denial, but a story concocted. A story that omitted the love she held for Patsy.

Not since her College days had Delia engaged in speculation that there was some unseen man in her life. Even then it had only occurred once. This mysterious male suitor. The reason had been innocent enough, romantic even. Delia so wanted to tell the world about her exciting, new romance. Had wanted to share in the stories amongst her fellow nurses of all the kind, and not so kind, things their partners had done. Her Pat was a dashing, tall-red head with dreamy blue eyes. From good stock, their courtship had been conventional. Starting out as friends, they found a growing attraction to each other that couldn't be ignored. It had been Pat who made the first move, Delia had giggled to her friends. One night, over a friendly game of cards and a little liquid courage, it finally happened. Delia had been cheating; sitting on extra cards. Pat, laughing, had attempted to lift her legs to uncover the evidence. Pat had fumbled and landed on Delia, pinning her down. The look they had shared â€" of wanting, yearning, had been enough. Pat kissed her, nervous and brief at first and then... Delia's friends had given each other knowing looks. That was how it started, they said. Brief nervous fumbling. And then, just when you think you've managed to catch a sensitive guy who wants to wait too, is prepared to because you're different to all the other girls... Well, you rent a cheap motel, move to the back seat of his parent's car, let yourself be pressed against the wall of a dance hall. And that's that.

Delia had protested that Pat wasn't like that. Her Pat was sweet, stoic, had always put her first. But they had simply laughed and thought her naive, felt sorry for her even. And so, when the lie had got out of hand, when there were too many questions, too many demands to meet this unbelievable man, too many excuses as to why this

couldn't be, Delia had declared that they were right. That Pat had been the same as all the other boys they had warned her about. Her friends were not surprised when it ended; it had made her one of the girls. Delia had enjoyed the solidarity. But felt all the more guilty, sneaking Patsy into her room at night, whispering to her that she loved her. But only when the coast was clear.

Patsy, had been, is, as perfect as she had described, thought Delia. But a secret. Then. And now.

Delia closed her eyes. Poor, brave, beautiful Patsy had to face their lie. Alone. And here she was, on the verge of another lie. Of a mysterious gentleman that made her happy, when it was Patsy who was her everything.

Delia's mind raced. She could tell Barbara that she was mistaken - that there was no gentleman. If there was to be no Patsy in her story, then there would be no story at all. No tale of being saved from a life of unhappiness by the love of a good man.

But even so, she thought, there would still be questions.

Delia's hands turned to fists beside her. She was sick to death of being afraid. Of being terrified of inevitable prying questions. Sick of only answering by omission. It had steered her away from any real, tangible friendship. That's what friends did. They asked about each others lives, helped each other get ready for dates, whispered about romantic gestures. She had never had that "only an illusionary version.

So, thought Delia, she could tell Barbara a half-truth, that there were no gentlemen. Or she could tell the whole truth and damn the consequences. Risk the imitation of friendship for an authentic one. Risk her livelihood for a life.

Delia's eyelids clenched. She left out a slow, measured breath.

"Delia, are you alright?" asked Barbara.

Delia opened her eyes to find that Barbara was sharing the seat with her once more. Her gaze steady and concerned. "You don't look well," said Barbara.

"No." said Delia, calmly, eyes on her lap.

"No? You're not well?" asked Barbara, concerned.

Delia shook her head. "No." She matched Barbara's gaze, "I'm not going to lie any more."

10. Chapter 10

Author Note: __You guyyyyys, this one was hard to write! Whilst I know the way i've written Trixie is not necessarily true to character, I've taken some creative license. But it's all for the greater good, I assure you. Just bare with me!_

Oh and apologies for the previous cliff-hangers. I come from the

land of Neighbours and Home and Away â€" it's entrenched. I was almost about to incorporate a newly eye-patched Barbara, talking to a fireplace, wine glass in hand, but thought... too much._

Warning: Angst Central

* * *

><p>Trixie Franklin has many good virtues. Indeed, upon their first meeting Barbara thought that she had simply radiated sunshine and rainbows. This perception had changed slightly over time, of course. By the end of Barbara's first fortnight at Nonnatus House she had declined a night cap so many times; endured endless gossip about the private lives of nuns, that she had altered her position. No, Trixie Franklin illuminated cheerful feistiness and freshly popped champagne, Barbara had concluded. Both excellent qualities, but slightly less innocent.<p>

Over time the entire residence of Nonnatus House had stumbled upon Trixie's slightly less alluring quality. She was quite simply as stubborn as a mule. Trixie's insistence that her exercise class was a priority, and incessantly suggesting that Barbara at least _try _a tipple, were testament to this.

The alcohol _had not_ served to relax Barbara enough to send her to sleep, as Trixie had promised. Instead Barbara had hiccuped her way through an overly detailed sermon: _Why oh why were socks called socks? _Though mostly incoherent, she had concluded they must have been invented by someone named Sock. Barbara was thankful that she was not a direct descendant. Barbara Sock was not becoming. She did like socks though, they were "most handy in winter."

Indeed Trixie's stubbornness could lead to priceless moments - an intoxicated Barbara. And moments less desired - bending over in leotards for an instructor who could model lingerie.

It could also, Patsy now realised, lead to nastiness. Trixie's obstinate nature revealed itself in full force as she refused to alter her fierce eye contact, nor answer the imposing question.

Why are you even here?

Trixie knew why, of course. She was jealous, hurt, sneaky, a bad friend. A concoction of all the ghastly traits, the Trixie of cheerful feistiness and freshly popped champagne, could never admit to.

But Patsy was also bullheaded. Delia had informed her of this almost daily. Mostly the trait had been used to advance some well-meaning cause. She had been relentless in ensuring, despite all odds, that her Scouts learnt something â€" anything, whilst under her watch. For their part, the Scouts had learnt that Patsy was much calmer and good-humoured when Ms Busby tagged along.

Then, of course, there were those damn cigarettes. A habit she managed to keep defiantly, despite Delia's constant reminders of the health consequences. And indeed the bedroom consequences. Delia was not so stubborn in her reprimanding, it seemed.

And so, sitting adjacent the blonde, Patsy matched Trixie in

bloody-minded looks of impending death by not-so-friendly fire.

This unyielding, Trixie had not accounted for. Surely, after all that had been revealed Patsy would be crumbling at her feet? Not causing Trixie's own feet to tremble.

She raised an eyebrow at the red-head. History, Trixie knew, dictated that she would win the battle.

As a child Trixie's younger brothers were renown for their mischief. They would steal flag-poles from front lawns and the cooling cakes on neighbour's windowsills. They were branded trouble-makers. Acquaintances failed to understand how they could belong to the same blood-line as that 'nice' Trixie. Unaware that it was Trixie who was the source of encouragement. Sitting back, eating the very cake her brothers had been scolded for.

Despite knowing she was wrong for using her brothers for personal gain, Trixie simply could not own up to this flaw in her personality. That she were capable of acts that were frowned upon. Besides, there were no rewards for admitting injustice. Certainly no cake. Forgiveness? she thought. Perhaps.

But seeing the venom on Patsy's face, Trixie discounted the possibility.

"Answer me!" Patsy demanded, her breathing less erratic.

Trixie felt her insides spilling over.

"Why. Are. You. Here?" Patsy repeated, louder.

"Why are you?" Trixie retaliated. The immediacy â€" an attempt to escape inquisition.

Patsy fell silent.

"And what is here exactly? This place?"

Trixie paused, letting the words fill the air. "Why don't you enlighten me?"

Trixie smirked, knowing full well what Gateways was. She wanted to hear it from Patsy â€" to take the heat off what had bought her here.

"Oh please Trixie, you act as if you haven't been spying. As if I'm in the wrong!" shouted Patsy.

"Well aren't you?" screamed Trixie. She immediately regretted her words.

Patsy rose to her feet, her anger giving way. "Pats, I'm sorry. I didn't mean..."

Patsy stood above her, staring down to her features; a mixture of hurt and rage in her face.

"You know," said Patsy, "I thought of all people, that you would be on my side. After the soldier you covered for, I thought..." Patsy

stopped. She had almost likened herself to a fellow queer. She swallowed the word. Afraid of it's consequences.

Trixie sighed. She remembered the conversation they shared. It seemed so insignificant then. It had happened after the husband of a patient had been caught engaging in... what had Police called it? Unnatural Acts? Trixie wondered what other insignificant conversations, would soon become significant with hindsight.

"Pats..."

Patsy turned to her, but Trixie couldn't think of the words. She wasn't sure what to say. Beyond accusations and snide remarks. Her defence, her armour had held her words hostage.

"What?" asked Patsy. "You're going to sit there and pretend - after the spying, that look of disgust, the accusation that how I feel is... that you're on my side?"

"If you had just told me this wouldn't..."

"This wouldn't have happened?" Patsy interrupted. "You wouldn't have had to spy on me like I was..." Patsy's eyes wandered, searching for the words, "a bloody war criminal!"

Trixie stood to her feet. "I don't think you're a criminal, Patsy." She looked to her, eyes concerned, head positioned slightly off-kilter. Then looked away. "But you're not who I thought you were."

Patsy kicked an empty can that littered the alley. Not in anger, but an attempt at distraction. She let out a long breath, ready to tell Trixie that nothing had changed. She was exactly the strong, reliable friend she had been just hours before. It was a speech well rehearsed.

But of course things had changed. Not all her doing.

"Well", Patsy traced a cobblestone with the tip of her shoe, "you're not the friend I thought I had either."

Trixie sucked in the air, as if all the words Patsy had said could be consumed and forgotten. She exhaled. "Friend," she said. "Let's talk about that shall we?"

Patsy scoffed, "so you don't want to be my friend now that you know?" She shook her head, incredulously.

"Know what, Patsy?" Trixie asked, pleading. She took a step toward her.

Patsy concentrated on the movements her foot was making, outlining the imperfect square in the road. She was aware that she should leave, could leave. But she wanted to be sure that her secret remained safe. This meant, of course, that she would have to say it. The actual words that she could barely say to herself, to Delia even. She wasn't sure she could.

"Why do you even care?" Patsy cried, not daring to look at the blonde approaching her. Patsy placed her arm out - hand stretched, fingers

pointed at the sky. It stopped Trixie from moving closer.

"I care because I_ thought_ we were friends," said Trixie, staring at the hand before her.

"Friends don't spy on each other!" screamed Patsy.

"Friends don't _lie_ to each other!" Trixie's shoulders slumped. "I know I shouldn't have followed you. I wouldn't have if I knew..." Trixie scoffed, "Christ Pats, I'm not even sure I know now."

Patsy released her arm, letting it fall to her side. She turned from Trixie.

Trixie waited for Patsy to explain, to say the words aloud, but knew it wouldn't come.

"You know I thought you were seeing someone."

Patsy turned her head, curious.

"I saw you" Trixie paused. "_And Delia_", she said delicately.

Patsy closed her eyes at the mention of Delia's name.

"You were outside, dressed up. Completely different attire than you had been wearing when you left. You were not, as it were, with Mrs Busby."

Trixie waited until the full weight of the insinuation had landed. "So I thought - those two are up to something." She paused. "And I followed."

Trixie began to pace between the two adjacent walls encompassing the alley. "I saw you laughing with whom I _thought_ were two sophisticated gentlemen. I thought you were keeping them from me. That you were embarrassed to introduce them to dear, drunk ol' Trixie."

Trixie stopped pacing. She turned to face Patsy. "And _that_, to answer your question, is why I'm here â€" wounded, sober, pride."

An excruciating silence filled the air.

"So why dear Patsy, _are you_?"

Patsy braced herself. She thought of how brave Delia would be if she were here. Delia would tell Trixie what she _was_. That she was in love. With a woman. And Trixie could accept it or that would be the end of their friendship. But Delia wasn't here. She had abandoned her; escaped with Barbara, of whom no explanation was needed.

Patsy felt all the courage drain out of her. No explanation was needed here either, she concluded. Trixie had seen what _she was_ with her very eyes. To expect a full confession, after all Trixie's antics, was downright elitist.

"That's none of your business," said Patsy, at last. She looked to Trixie, "despite what you think Nurse Franklin, the universe doesn't revolve around you. Certainly not my personal life."

Trixie felt a stab of pain in her chest. Perhaps she really had misconstrued their friendship. The pain tightened as Trixie thought of all she had confided. The drinking, the insecurities about Tom. Patsy had given her nothing. Patsy had thought her untrustworthy, had not thought her a friend.

It was the pain that caused Trixie to lash out "to speak all the words that were in her head. Words she knew should never be said aloud. Words that nice girls didn't say. Feelings that nice girls didn't have.

"It is my business" she spat.

Trixie grabbed hold of Patsy's shoulder, turning her around forcefully. "It's my business when I have to make excuses for you. Explain why you're mysteriously absent from your bed when you're not on shift."

Patsy backed away from her.

"It's my business when I share a room with you." Trixie stepped closer to her, lessening the gap. "When I dance with you. Undress in front of you."

Patsy ceased retreating. "Really Trixie," she yelled, "if you think that I'm attracted..."

"It's my business," Trixie interrupted, "when you do what you do for a living."

And there it was, thought Patsy. The reason why she could never tell. Her livelihood, all she had worked for, was at stake.

Patsy's doggedness collapsed. Tears erupted from her eyes. She turned and ran.

Trixie watched as Patsy turned the corner, her loud sobs filling the silence of the night. She felt her legs give way with the weight of all she had said. She hit the ground with the same impact her words had surely had on Patsy.

Patsy - who had never judged her, despite the break ups, her drinking, her inflexibility. It had taken her friend running away from her, running because of her, to remember what had slipped away.

"You cold-blooded, pig-headed, judgemental fool!" she spat to herself.

Trixie had won the battle. But the war within herself had just begun.

End
file.